

Hello Representatives,

This is an account directly from the soldiers protecting our capitol in Washington D.C. on February 25, 2021. I have only made minor wording and spelling edits.

- The biggest issues anyone has are raw meat, having the same breakfasts completely lacking in nutrition, and meals being late so routinely that lunch arrives shortly before dinner. Soldiers have been spending their own money just to feed themselves and have been for weeks.
- Preparing to Return to DC.
 - When we reported back to the Augusta armory, we were given MRE's as our meals for the first three days of orders which is not considered a meal while in a garrison setting unless all other options are exhausted. We spent the first two days at FCTC processing out to leave for DC and were denied at the dining facility even when trying to purchase meals on our own. Once we left for DC, when you would normally be paid travel pay for the day again, we were told that we had been provided MRE's for our meals.
- Ongoing Jan 30th to February 11th
 - Upon arriving in D.C., we were processed in and given our first meal by the USO which is also not a government provided meal. Once arriving at our hotel, the mealtimes were given, and we expected that we would be fed adequately. Since the meal plan started, we have been provided a continental style breakfast containing a piece of fruit, fruit juice, some sort of granola bar and a danish/baked good every day completely lacking appropriate nutrition for soldiers. This has caused soldiers to have to pay out of pocket for their breakfast meal in order to get enough calories and nutrient rich calories specifically.
 - Meals are delivered to the hotel as well as our work site. As a second shift company we get our breakfast and lunch meals brought to the hotel and dinner is brought to the work site.
 - Lunch and dinner have been provided with some caveats. On more than one occasion lunch has been so late that we were given lunch only an hour before dinner arrived. We have also had multiple incidents when a meal was provided but a vegetarian option was not. We have multiple soldiers in our ranks that for religious or medical reasons are not able to consume meat or specific types of meat to which we were told to have them just remove the meat and eat the other options (sides) in the meal. This has also caused a financial strain as those soldiers have either had to purchase their own meals, their first line leaders took them to buy food, or they had to go without.
 - Health risks – Images have been provided to Rep. Damoose's office; one showing the nutrition-less breakfasts provided and the other two are from dinner meals containing raw or undercooked meat that is potential very dangerous if consumed. While I understand that the contractors are making meals for thousands of soldiers, we are not on a deployment to a foreign country and there should be no excuse for sending meals like this out of a facility in the U.S.

That completes the direct account. These are my personal comments: RAW FOOD. WE ARE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. This should absolutely disgust you. If they served this to you, of course you would refuse and make other arrangements to feed yourself for that day and a long-term plan to fix this issue. That has not been done for these men and women. Once raw meals arrive, it is often too late to order their own food and eat at a reasonable time or before the mission. Keep in mind, this is money out of their pockets.

Since then, several cases of food poisoning have occurred. On March 1, 2021, soldiers were told to stop eating the catered meals for two days and to instead eat the provided MREs. After this announcement, many soldiers went and purchased more of their own food. They are now being told to take the catered meals, check for raw meat, and document any meals necessary, and to throw them away afterwards. Many of the men and women have lost faith in the caterer and are choosing to purchase their own meals for the rest of the stay. They are choosing to spend their own money to keep themselves safe.

While in Washington D.C., soldiers have spent their own money on breakfast due to inadequate nutrition as well as to make up for the raw food they were served. All of this is occurring where the cost of living is higher than it is at home.